

## gunpowder tears

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by [rabbit\\_with\\_a\\_sword](#)

## Summary

Sam's brother, once upon a time, had sworn never ever to lie to him.

Sam really should've seen it coming. But Sam's brother, once upon a time, had been a good man.

more angst, guys! :)

Sam's brother, once upon a time in a land far away, had built a little robot for him and called it Sam Nook. Sam had complained about having to clean his room, and Darien had made a face, and disappeared into his workshop, and come back with a little robot as tall as his arm. Darien's proud smile as he handed it to him and told him Sam Nook would help break it down still lives behind Sam's eyes every time he sees it standing in the corner.

*Honestly, Sam, what did you do, detonate in the middle of this?*

Sam's brother, once upon a time, had laughed when Sam had told him jokes, and stayed up late to help with homework, and taught their microwave how to sing. It still won't reheat anything unless Sam hums along.

Sam's brother, once upon a time, had sworn never ever to lie to him. Had sighed, shoulders tense under a weight no one had ever asked him to carry, and promised in a quiet voice that he'd only ever tell the truth to Sam, but what lay unsaid was that being *truthful* and being *honest* were very different things, and Darien had made no promises as to the second.

*... It's nothing I can't handle. I'll sleep later, I need to fix this first.*

Sam really should have seen it coming. The Warden, Pandora's Vault, everything that started with brothers laughing and ended with one bleeding out alone on the floor only a few days before the one call Sam actually picked up on. But Darien didn't want to talk about what mattered and Sam didn't want to hear about what didn't and so they kept up some semblance of professionalism, if not normalcy, because Sam's brother, once upon a time, had been a good man.

Before the Warden ate him whole.

Once upon a time, in a land as far away as an empty home, Sam's brother was the Warden.

Once upon a time, the Warden was Sam's brother.

Sam didn't know which one was more true, didn't know when one stopped being the other, when Darien's laughter faded and the need for control took over. There was no *once upon a time* when Sam realised they'd both drawn lines in the sand and the other was on the wrong side.

Once upon a time in a land far away there was a story about two brothers, one who became a Hero because it was the right thing to do, and one who became a Hero to follow his brother. Once upon a time in a land far too close, a little brother had to accept that the reason he became a Hero was worse than the Villains he fought.

***They're children!***

*Punishment comes for us all.*

Once upon a time, a little brother had to sit in a hospital waiting room with the knowledge that his brother decided losing an arm was an adequate punishment for interfering in the choices made by the Heroes' Committee. Once upon a time, Sam had to sit with the knowledge that he would have believed Darien if he said the sky was as green as their hair.

*Power means responsibility, Sam-a-lam. And responsibility is doing the right thing, even when it's hard.*

Darien would never, *ever*, hurt Sam, but the Warden had a cell prepared for Trigger.

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